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Editor

S.N. Chandrasekhar
67, Basappa Layout
Bangalore - 560 019
Tel.: 6675758

Advisory Board

S.N. Chandrasekhar
K.C. Shivappa
S.N. Ramaprasad
H.R. Ananth

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Artistes Show The Way

It is well over fifty years since our beloved country won its Independence. During these eventful years, it has seen a sea-change in more than one aspect of life. To borrow a familiar Dickensian phrase, it has been the best of times and it has been the worst of times. While there has been a phenomenal progress in the fields of education, science and technology, this has only made the growing problem of unemployment more challenging. Likewise, the strides made in food production and health care can compare favourably with any affluent country. But the nagging problems of sickness and malnutrition persist as menacingly as ever. Literacy rate has never been as easy as it is today. Yet more than half the population still remains deprived of elementary education. Bridging the gap between the rich and poor still remains an Utopian dream.

The situation is more dismal when it comes to the question of fostering national integration. Though the oft-repeated slogan "unity in diversity" sounds meaningful, it is the divisive forces like communalism, casteism and linguistic chauvinism that are seemingly more active than moves towards fostering unity. If at all the spirit of unity manifests itself it is only in times of a national crises like the intermittent wars with Pakistan that threatened our hard won freedom. The spontaneous way people all over the country and those settled abroad munificently responded to help the bereaved families of the martyred soldiers and those who suffered severe injuries speaks volumes for the patriotic zeal of our people. This euphoria, alas, is shortlived, paradoxically the very same people stooping to capitalise the situation for political purposes!

The artiste community, including painters, theatre personalities, dancers, musicians and cine artistes did not lag behind in rising to the occasion. The spontaneity in which they joined together to raise funds for the noble cause is eloquent testimony to their patriotic fervour and humane disposition. They got up shows in a variety of ways all over the country and collected sizeable amounts to meet the demands of the situation. That verily exemplified the popular slogan "unity in diversity", not witnessed ever before in such an emphatic manner. That also raised hopes that artistes can show the way for achieving the elusive national integration.

As encouraging was a function got up in the City recently by Nupura, the well-known school of Bharathanatyam. The occasion was to pay homage to E. Krishna Iyer, the savant of Chennai who had saved the dance form from extinction. The sponsor for the impressive function was the Delhi-based India International Rural Culture Centre, a unique coming together of three diverse interests. How wonderful if this spirit of dooce could endure!

□ S.N. Chandrasekhar

Be More Enterprising, Minister Tells Artistes

Kusuma Rao

A dignified, pleasant function was jointly organised by The Bangalore Press and Bharatiya Vinya Bhavam to release the special issue of **Phoenix (Music's Millennium)** in early August 1999. Veteran R.K. Srikantan released the number. Minister for Information and Publicity M.P. Prakash was the Chief Guest.

The speech by the Minister was relevant and spiced with good humour. He spoke of how our own artistes might to wake up and get about, make themselves known and blaze a trail of name and fame. "We do not set a proper value on our own assets and are quite content to accept a tenth of the remuneration offered to North Indian artists", he lamented.

The Minister praised the



Vidwan R.K. Srikantan releasing the Number

efforts of the **Phoenix** folks and wished them good luck. Srikantan also complimented the Editorial Board for its dedicated work.

A vocal recital by M.S. Sheila, flanked by Nalina Mohan on Violin and Anur Ananthakrishna Sharma on

Mridangam formed part of a well attended function.

Sheila's music, as always, was worth waiting for. Opening with a rare Vinayaka kriti (Sindoramakriya) she regaled the listeners with familiar songs like Sagasaga (Sriranjani) and Sarasadalayame (Saramathi). Mohana got a spacious airing, an enlivening Nanna Palimpa sparkling with an array of Niraval and Swara Prasthara in the charana.

The Thani avarthanam of Shiva was invigorating. Sheila concluded the compact concert with an inspiring Paramuradasa Pada (Samanya Vallave) in Charukeshi and a thillana in Paras.

Nalina Mohan ably supported Sheila's seasoned vocalism with her timely



The Twin meets : R.K. Srikantan and Dr. M.R. Gautham

(Continued to Page 3)

City Vainika regales Maharashtra listeners



City Vainika regales Maharashtra listeners

In two Veena recitals of Rukmini Krishnan of Bangalore—one at Pune and another at Mumbai attracted

usual attention. Rukmini has been performing for over five years both in India and abroad. Her concert at NCPA in June

last was her second at the same venue in one year, which speaks volumes about her popularity.

Mathr Malayadhvaja (well-known Kamas Darini) gave Rukmini a laying start to her Bombay concert. A brisk rite in Nanta to Vinayaka and melodious Bhajare Manasa (Bhempalas) came in for as systematic a treatment.

Panthavarali received a more detailed airing, the kriti Apparama Bhakti invested with lively nervalal. Kapi (Intasinkhya) was the main raga for the evening. While the alapana was trite, a neat round of tanam embellished the form. Aitting Sindhu-Bhairavi piece and a Thillana in Karnaravangi rounded off the enjoyable fare.

For the Poorna Sangeetha Sabha the celebrated Bhairavi Varna enlivened the proceedings. After a crisp Banthurethi (Hamsanada), Madyamavathi traversed majestically to arrive at Palincha in its haunting nebolic grace.

Before the specimens Kalyani, invested with a rary Thanam and Pallavi in Khamla jati Tripota tala. Rukmini rendered Ramachandram (Vasanthai) with reposeful ease. Ragas like Kanada, Begula, Hamsamani and Sindhubhairavi lightened the Swaraprastara in the Pallavi.

The Hameerkalyani Thillana gave a fitting finale to the concert in which Rukmini was accompanied by B.C. Manjunath on Mridangam and S.N. Narayanamurthy on Ghatam both from Bangalore.



Vidushi M.S. Sheela backed by Nalina Mohan on Violin and Anoor Ananthakrishna Sharma on Mridanga in concert

interpretation. Sriharsha introducing guests and artistes in chaste Kannada.

Manodharma: Soul of Indian Music

—Garland Rajagopalan

In the sweet sphere of Indian classical music, *manodharma* stands for inspired, spontaneous, extempore improvisation. It is the sweet anchor, *tour de force* of Indian music. It is an intellectual, individualistic adventure into what is actually unknown, unperceived and uncharted. It is entirely a creative endeavour, a technical melodic kite-flying which may pervade musician's delineation of *raaga* [svarasam] or *taana* and in the exposition of *kalpana swara* as well as solo [tana anuvartana] percussion. The enormity of the scope of venturing in *manodharma* is indeed baffling depending on the cerebral and musical armoury of each artiste. It comes into play even while introducing variations called *sarugatis*. It has no fixity of shape, range, tempo, modulation, timbre, time-measure or any of the usual constraints. It is akin to the delightful flights of the celestial bird, Garuda high up the blue skies on a pleasant morn with all the beautiful variations it carries out or indulges in. In short, it is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient!

Manodharma is a capricious asset, which may sometimes desert even a maestro and the wizard. Thus one finds sometimes top musicians very stale and a

novice scaling heights with uninhibited ease, totally unnatural and unexpected of him. It may put to shame great expectations and cast pre-planned, pre-rehearsed *smucarnas*, *gamakas*, *bricks*, *janrus*, embellishments and other ornamental presentation totally out of bounds not infrequently; but suddenly on other occasions, choose to catapult the musician to dizzy heights he himself had never visualized. The titan and wizard Maharajapuram Viswamuthu Ayyar would not infrequently disappoint his fans since he was the most, ideal example of adroit musical versatility, grandeur and wayward ways. When *manodharma* chooses to stay away from an artiste, he is blissfully devoid of awareness of his conscious musical self, his mind stands divorced of all access to paths and links with improvisation and he finds himself fish out of water or like a storm-battered boat in oceanic wastes as is beautifully described by Tyagaraja in *Nauka Caritra*—*Allakallola maayanamma song in raaga, Sorastram*. [How cyclonic storms devastated Sourashtra coast just two years back is recent history.] The mind gets tense declining to rise and link up like a plane or automobile that has lost its control or a naughty, recalcitrant child and get into grips with evading *manodharma* flights. The

latter may either elude to the dismay and disappointment of all he suddenly invest him with the spirit—a sort of passing estrangement and subsequent reconciliation as in the field of *sringara*. In this context, the relationship between the musician and *manodharma* is akin to a *virnathakanthita* [the *nanyaka* in the musician bring nervously anxious on account of her lover not turning up as expected] or a *vipralambita* [disappointed in not finding her lover at the appointed time or place]. The musician is virtually in the state of a *viyoga* [longing for the lover]

★ ★ ★

Every right to freedom is lodged in by mandatory directive principles. Even so, this *manodharma* too has to conform to certain fundamental stipulations such as—

Conforming to the *aarabana* and the *avurubana* of the *raaga* presently dealt with by the artiste;

Focussing on the *bhavana*, *charya* and other essential elements of the *raaga* fully; and presenting the *sadhitya* [lyric] and *tana* in all their impressive and inherent grandeur in a spirit of camaraderie with it and not in isolation in which case it should fail to evoke appreciation from audience.

Manodharma underscores the grade and merit of the

musician and of the concert. *Sans manodharma*, there could be no classical music in India. It is the essential ingredient, the soul *jiva* of Indian music—Carnatic or Hindustani.

Manodharmic venture in *roaga* delineation, *taana* or *swara* exposition is colourfully compared to the flight of the sacred eagle with its majestic, casual, lazy, *couka kaala* floats on the high skies, its sudden sweeps, tickle twists, unexpected turns and swirls. The percussionist seeks to divine the next phase of the principal artiste to present his accompaniment in time with it. Not infrequently he may fail and be disappointed in his anticipation by chance or by the wilful dunkirking resorted to by the main artiste. [This was much in evidence in earlier decades when accompanists were at the mercy of titans who dictated terms and not infrequently there were undeclared trials and competitions too... Then the principal vocalist or instrumentalist was not a mere *primas inter pares*. A few were autocrats and tyrants confident of, secure in and over-reliant on the hands on their rich armoury in *manodharma*. The times gave scope for it and they had the self-confidence and challenging spirit, inputs and the guts to indulge in it! It is all to the weighted 'credit' side of *manodharma* that equipped them so!

★ ★ ★

Manodharma ensures variety, ever fresh presentation and freedom from the shackles of notation and pre-digested *alanpana*, *swaras* and *tana*. It would be well nigh impossible for a classical artiste to give a rubber-stamp encore of any presentation as in other systems. Further the artiste is faced with a continuous inter-play of the conscious and the sub-conscious minds vying with each other trying to present yet another new, fresh and ostensibly a better one! And *manodharma* is given full play or a restricted role depending on the occasion, the nature of audience, the time of presentation and the time allotted. *Manodharmic* *samharas*, *samgatis*, manipulative *swara* delineation, etc., have a lasting and lingering impact on the *rasika*, who stands enraptured by their excellence and seeks to recapture and relive the experience any time after it! He is pleasantly haunted by conjuring visions of the alluring rendition once heard [and stored up in memory] even as a fond lover regales himself with the delectable joys shared with his/her lover as is most nonchalantly brought out by the saintly recluse, the Uthukadu bard, in song *Alai Panyadre* [*Kaanado*]:

'Oru tanitta vanattil anaittu unaravi kaduttu magittava!'

[How in that isolated jungle, you fondly embraced me and injected ravishing joy!]

And national poet Subramania Bharati too

endows a lady with many a happy recollection of baby Krishna such as planting a kiss so like her husband! Superlative *manodharmic* presentation lasts, lingers indelibly, ready to be recalled.

★ ★ ★

'A thousand thoughts lie within a man that he does not know till he takes on his pen to write', said William Makepeace Thackeray. Why to pen only? Veteran connoisseurs, critics and *rasikas* could recall phases of thrilling, soulstirring rendition of Maharajapuram, Ariyakudi, Musiri, T.N. Rajarathinam, Mali and other veterans in scores and some at variance like a philosopher, scientist or a lawyer at the flash of a productive, conjuring thought or solution. In spite of failure at successive concerts of Maharajapuram Viswanatha Ayyar, I have seen connoisseurs flocking for one—yes, just one flash—of his once gallant lilting *manodharmic* phrase, some sudden cloud-bursts of pagantry, unbridled fireworks, cascades of intricacies into the deepest recesses of the grandeur of the musical jangle with its crowded tropical embellishments and incursions into the vast imagery and vistas of musical outer space which indeed has no limit.

'Experience is not what happens to you; but what you make of what happens to you', said Aldous Huxley. In 1940, Sangita Kalamidhi T.V. Subba Rao declared:

'The number of musicians practising music is now a legion. But few of them could equal them in depth, power or imagination of the giants of yore.'

This is partly attributable to causes like urbanisation, appearance of notation system, proliferation of cassettes, the total disappearance of gurukula system, the short duration of collegiate and institutional courses in music which go to the detriment of qualifications in a quicker period of time and the practice of apprentices choosing preceptors according to their convenience, availability and adjustability. For short, *ad hoc* durations and the commercial relationship between the two. The practice of listening, assimilation and intensive exercise or rehearsal has taken a back seat as could be seen from the sparse presence of musicians at concerts of other artistes. Books, notation, cassettes, radio or television have taken over instead.

(To be concluded)

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Impressive dance debut in Geneva

Chitra Subramanian



Debutante Anusha with Guru Sujatha Venkatesh

Art lovers of Geneva were treated to two hours of inspiring Bharatanatyam Aravgetram of Anusha Sundaram, daughter of Raji and Ambi Sundaram.

Anusha is a student of Sujatha Venkatesh, herself a Bharatanatyam dancer from Bangalore. The young artiste presented a complete and traditional repertoire beginning with a Pushpanjali in Arabi, weaving the performance through a Varnam in Shanmugapriya and ending with a Tillana (Maand).

Insightful commentary kept the audience rapt in attention as the dancer went from the simple Alarippu to the

complicated Varnam and a delightful Kuravanji.

Vocal support, was provided by Vasudha, also from Bangalore. Bhavani Shankar was on the Mridangam and Janaki Raghunath accompanied on the violin. Mohesh accompanied the performance on the flute.

Fifteen year-old Anusha is a student of tenth standard at the International School in Geneva. The guru, Ms. Venkatesh, had her initial training under Chandrabhaga Devi and U.S. Krishna Rao. She moved to Geneva in 1984 and has since devoted her time to propagating this Indian art form in Europe through workshops and performances.

Mixed Fare in ANKURA Festival

—Athreya

One of the major, very useful annual activities of the Karnataka Nrityakala Parishath (representing dancers of all descriptions in the State) is ANKURA a festival of budding aspirants. The fourth such festival this year featured 21 young dancers, including Bharathanatyam, Kuchipudi and Kathak. Bharathanatyam was in a majority.

In retrospect one found that ideal pieces like Padam and Javali are thrust to the background, in preference to the descriptive Devaramana. Thus it was no easy task to assess the youngsters' achievement in the aspect of abhinaya.

Under the circumstances the only means of judging their dance potential was left to Nritha. Even in Varnams the tendency seemingly is to go for numbers that don't easily lend themselves to interpreting the 'Nayika Bhava's and the corresponding 'sancharis'.

Rashmi Srinivas (Guru : Nandini Eashwar) was a case in point. The popular composition Veeri-Boni (Bhairavi) is a favourite of all musicians. But the Thana Varnam falls short lyrically. Hence the piece had to sustain only on Nritha. Rashmi, no doubt, was adequate in laya-based forays. But could not carry conviction, the sancharis remaining elusive.

The case of K.S. Poornima (Guru : Radha Sridhar) was no better. Instead of a tested padavarna worthy of a senior like her, she delineated a popular kriti Brochevarevaru (Khamas), investing it with Sholkattus. It was odd to say the least. More questionable is the move to introduce Jatis to a well-known keerthana Srinahagadapathi (Sowrastana). In either case, abhinaya was at a discount.



K.S. Poornima

Nor did Janani Murali (Guru : Padma Murali) reveal a better sense of aesthetics, Nritha turning out to be a mainstay. Sumathi Inamdar (Guru : Geetha Datar) revealed a good grounding in the idiom, forcefully projected in the



Janani Murali

varna Muha Maya (Karaharapriya). There were flowing grace in her Angikas, but her abhinaya was below par, the facials failing to register any expression.

Sangeeta Puneekar, Shilpa Puneekar (Guru : The Kirans) also evoked a sense of empathy. How can a kriti like Senapathe (Pantivarali) inspire a meaningful exposition! It is for this reason that Urmila Dineswamy and Madhumathi Rao (Guru : Padmini Rao) scored. Swamiya Karedu (Keeravani), though lyrically commonplace, sparkled in well-knit. Adavus and sleek expressiveness. There was poise in their stance. Urmila's interpretation for Advani Shullvay and Madhu's for Chelinenethu (Javali) substant-



Vidya Shumlakka

ally brought out the nayika element.

Vidya Shumlakka (Guru : Padmini Rameshchandran) and Ajay V. (Guru : Lalitha Srinivasan) also revealed an attractive persona in Nritya, but the facials are no match to

the former's elegance. Sowmya Attreya also falls in a similar perspective.



Sowmya Attreya

Even for Kuchipudi V. Karpagam (Guru : Lakshmi Rajamani) appeared rather theatrical. Her Nritya also

ಸಾಂಸ್ಕೃತಿಕ ಸಂ



Karpagam V

could do with some restraint in the Bashy flexions.

V. Bharathi, M. Pavitra and Sanka Puranik (Guru : Maya Rao) in their Kathak showed promise, their Angikras, Charis in the thumri showing an instant lyrical appeal. But their facials have yet to gain depth.

Not Misplaced

In presenting young talent the suffix 'Prodigy' is liberally used. The chances of exaggeration are greater in the case of Bharathanatyam. For dance is essentially abhinaya-oriented, though the laya aspect cannot be undermined. In the case of Neelima (Guru Avasara Rukmaji of Vijayawada) the term was not fully misplaced. While the 12-year old's talent is verily precious as evidenced in her lively stance, dignified bearing and sharp Thattu-Mettu, it was more pronounced in the Shabdam 'Sarasijakshula.

The day's varnam was Rupamu Jonchi (Thudi). The initial Nritya turns at once



Neelima

spoke for her firm grounding in laya, a study rehearsals seen in every movement. But her

abhinaya seemingly drew more on over pleasantaries, than any purposeful expression. Overall, it was an impressive debut for the Kirans.

The same Varnam Rupamu Jonchi later in the Vidya Bhavan was seen in a different perspective in the interpretation of Gowri Kikkeri (Guru Padmini Rao). Even in the invocatory stage a pleasant shift in Gowri's gait was evident. Particularly reassuring to see that she had eschewed the nagging hesitancy. The resultant Nritya and Nritya showed a more convincing application. Though lacking in flexion and rechikas her Adavus and



Gown Kikkeri

Angikas were in place, vouching for substantial home work.

Earlier, Vijaya Marthanda's Laya-Lasya, School of Bharathanatyam and Kathak, presented a composite programme of dance at Kuvempu Kalakshetra.

Though 10-year old, the students of the school appeared not fully mature. Their Nritya had little of Kathak in it. But the Angikas were not short in linear grace. It is their expression which let them down.

Of the two main choreographed pieces in the agenda Krishna Lada made an impact more due to its dancerly formations than an expressive intent. Otherwise it could not take one beyond a classroom exercise. However, the same over-emphasis on Nritya gave a better imagery like Vasanthotsava. A flurry of flowing movements and graceful Sthanakas lent a touch of gaiety to the 100-minute programme.

Like Laya-Lasya, Kuwshika Nritya Vahini also has to make the ment with inexperienced dancers, the only exception being Mala Shashikanth, its Director.

Mala it was who brought credibility to the entire programme. The central piece titled Nupura-Ganga was based on a legend on Kaveri. Hence the confusion in the world "Ganga".

The redeeming feature is the familiar story of Lopa-mudra had a crisp movement. The Nritya was easy in its movement, thus accounting for some lively visuals. But Abhinaya right through remained as elusive as ever.

□

Cine Star Shines in Bharathanatya



Bhavana

Bhavana is a cine star of repute. Like others in the tinsel world she has been attracted by Bharathanatyam.

Student of the Kiran's, her

performance a while ago spoke for her earnest approach to the art. Her laya was in place and Angikas as in Ganesha Vandana testified to a keen

understanding of the basic elements. But the following pieces in Jayanthasri fell short in meeting the dancerly purport. The Varna Swamiya Varna (Paryikalyani) revelled with some glowing thernamams. But even in the first avarta, when the natwanga was thumping in the third kala, Bhavana was blissfully content on the first kala. It caused utter confusion in the korvus.

What lent substance to Bhavana's recital was her trite Abhinaya. Whether it was the Virahothkantitha in the varna or the Kanditha in Adavam Shollaval, she used her facials with conviction. If she pays greater attention to the Drishti Bhedha she is sure to go places.

□

Samata's sharad - Vilasa Impresses

—K. Raghavendra Rao

Samata Adhyayana Kendra of Mysore has been doing significant work in the field of upliftment of women under the Presidentship of Dr. Vijaya Dabbe, the well-known protagonist of women's rights. It has been holding counselling sessions, talks, seminars and has brought out several publications in Kannada on related subjects. It has secured a site in one of the Extensions and is moving towards the construction of its Centre with the co-operation of several organisations of the city.

In this laudable objective, the Kendra had organised a Dance - Drama at Jagannathan Palace Auditorium on July 10.

The feature styled "Sharad-Vilasa" was presented by "Nrityalaya" run by Dr. Tulasi Ramachandra. Dr. Tulasi, a

post-graduate in Kannada learnt Bharata Natya from Lalitha Dorai of Bangalore and from her well known sister Dr. Chomlmmani Namdagopal.

Dr. Tulasi has done considerable research in this field under the guidance of the renowned Kannada scholar Dr. T.V. Venkatachala Shastri for her thesis "Kannada Sahityadalli Nritya Kaleya Ugama Matta Vikasagalu". Apart from the main subject matter, the very bibliography and glossary of terms she has collected make this an important reference volume.

Concurrent to her research work, she has been striving for reconstruction of dances as depicted in Kannada literature over centuries. She has choreographed and presented many dances and dance - drama's based on poems and



Dr. Tulasi Ramachandra

episodes from Kannada works, both ancient and modern. The latest production was "Sharad vilasa", based on the "Subhadra Parinaya episode" from Kumbhara Vyasa's immortal work, "Karnata Bharatha Kathamangari". The story is too well-known, what needs mention is the manner in which a group of her disciples depicted the seasons, she herself taking on the role of entradhari, serving as bridges between various sequences of the drama.

Pushpanjali, a Mallari piece offered by Dr. Tulasi clad in her white silk dress ensemble drew attention, with the silhouette effects brought in by some intelligent lighting by Ravish. Kshama Lakshman as Arjuna, Soumya as Krishna, Punita as Balarama, Drepti Mukunda as Sathyabhama and Chandana as Subhadra were effective. Special mention must be made of the graceful lasya exhibited by Chamilana who portrayed Subhadra while



The Three Rabbits

reiprenating the love of Arjuna, in the strains of what is probably the most romantic of Indian ragas —Behag. The way she pointed out a group of penenrks to Arjuna, while imitating their movements, remains indelibly etched in the memory.

The music composed by Ganakalashree Sukanya Prabhakar was rendered by an ensemble comprising Malikeri Nagendra on vocal, N.N. Ganeshkumar on violin and H.L. Shivashankar Swami on mridanga, tabla and khul. Aparna was on Natuvanga. Dwarakantha's simple but effective stage setting and Rajeshwari Vastrakaya's costumes contributed to the overall effect of the one hour long dance - drama.

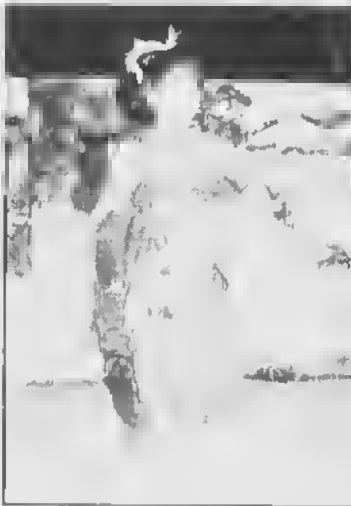
Absorbing Dance

Bharatanjali School of Dance, Sherla Sridhar, Samskrutha Samskruthi Varshacharana Samithi and Preethi Samsat came together to hold a three-day festival of Bharathanatyam, here in July last. A folk dance recital and an Ashtavadhana by R.Krishna the well known Indulstrialist-Philanthrophist of Mysore, inaugurated it.

Sherla Sridhar, student of M. Vishnudas, K Venkatak shamma and later Kalakshetra, Chennai, has given a number of performances here and also in major cities of Europe. She established the Bharatanjali School in 1985 and has trained a number of aspirants.

The first day's Bharathanatyam recital was by Hema Ramesh, Varalakshmi Ramani and Usha Shanmuganathan, all from Chennai and ex-alumni of Kalakshetra. The fare comprised Deepanjali (Nata), Vande Mataram (Dish), Natyanjali (Ragamalika), a Varana in Natakaranji and a Thillana.

Sherla herself presented the delectable "Shringa-pura adheswari Sharale" (Kalyani) and Sripadaraja Swami's "Sadhya mandali hedaya" (Salagabhairavi). It was an



The Sutradhar

engaging, live Guruprasad on vocal, H.S. Tandava Murthy on violin, A.P. Krishna Prasad on flute and B. Ravishankar on Mridanga, provided the musical support.

The second evening's programme was styled as "Swara-Laya". Appropriately, it started with intonations in Revathi and Banli, paying obeisance to Lord Shiva through the well known



Sherla Sridhar

couplet "Angikam bhuvanam yasya" and moved on to the ancient raga Mayamalavagaula. The students of Bharatanjali in the age range of six to 12 presented a forty-minute absorbing recital in a logical sequence right from Sarala Varase to run through the different "angas" of dance. It was a revelation that Kaleidoscopic groupings with perfect re-ordination could be this beautiful.

The latter half comprised a variety of folk dances. What with colourful costumes, steps, groupings, high-pitched singing and sheer brilliance it had its due impact.

The last evening's programme was in the Bharathanatyam marga by senior disciples of the school: Amrutha, Samanyitha, Saritha, Nivedita, Vidya Venkataramu and Preethi Venkataramu. This writer has witnessed Samanyitha's Rangapravesha three years ago and feels happy that she

has improved a lot. While all of them did well, Vidya Venkatamma, drew attention with her nritya—light on her feet and with her anga—shuddhi, she reminds one of bronze icons.

This writer feels constrained that while Gurniprasad is a good vocalist, his intonation of the fifteenth mantra of Ishapanishad gave exactly the opposite meaning due to wrong break-up of words. Obviously, he has not understood the import of what he was singing. Such liberties should not be taken with Vedas and Upanishads or for that matter, with any krithi.

The audience turn-out was good on all days. The proceedings were conducted mostly in Sanskrit by Dr. M.A. Jayashri.

Mrigasandesha

Mrigasandesha conveys a message from the animal kingdom to the human race for peaceful and harmonious co-existence, a message of animal wisdom in survival and symbiosis. At no other time in his history did man need this message so directly and so urgently than now.

Brahmavidya, a cultural organisation of Mysore, celebrated the National Sanskrit year by presenting two dance-dramas based on tales from two classics Panchatantra and Hitopadesha to convey this message. The fare enacted by children in the age group of five and 12 was

put on boards at the Jaganmohan Palace in May last.

Panchatantra and Hitopadesha are the quintessence of human wisdom of India, consisting of animal tales imparted to a young wayward prince by Vishnusharma, as lessons in the art of survival. The tales relate to all sorts of animals—the mighty but, foolish like, tiny but cunning, the meek but helpful, the weak but wise and so on, in parables from the animal jungle with telling parallels to the human jungle.

In “Bhasurakha Simha Katha”, lion king Bhasurakha is a very destructive force in the jungle. He kills other animals for mere fun. In order to put an end to this, the animals congregate and go to the lion king and talk to him into an agreement. Accordingly, the animals take turns to offer themselves as food to the mighty Bhasurakha.

When it is finally the turn of the clever rabbit it tricks the lion to kill himself. This interesting story is the “Mitrahedhya” portion of Panchatantra.

Durjansneha the other story is of two friends—a deer and a crow—and an evil stranger, a fox. The deer gets enamoured by the machinations of the fox (against the good advice of the crow) and gets herself trapped. But, the good crow comes to the aid of the deer and releases it from her deadly predicament. This is an adaptation from the



Senior Disciples of Bharathanjali School

“Hitopadesha”.

Both the stories with dialogues in Sanskrit, were set to Bharathanatyam by Radhika Nandakumar Founder-Director of Brahnavidya. Music was composed by R.S. Nandakumar employing appropriate Ragas. The music ensemble comprised R.S. Nandakumar as lead singer along with Bindu, Rajani Subramanya and Suresh for both solo and chorus parts. Radhika emceed the dance. H.S. Tandava Murthy, A.P. Krishna Prasad and Jaichandra Rao were on violin, flute and Mridanga respectively. Gangadhara Swami's decor was appropriate.

The Children in appealing costumes acquitted themselves very well. The audience applauded the sincere application of the youngsters. Annapoorna and Bhummika, who as sutradharins stole the show with their absolute involvement, deserve special mention.

Veena Wizardry

—S.N. Sivaswamy

When I was a gangling teenager, I first heard R.S. Keshavamurthy, one of the renowned veena players of this century, a disciple of none other than the great Veena Subbanna of Mysore. That was in the thirties, and the venue was Shankarayya Hall, the premises of the Bangalore Gayana Samaja.

Great veena players in those days came from Mysore, known as the heaven of Vainika. Later, much later, I was able to hear recitals by Keshavamurthy's illustrious sons, R.K. Srinivasa Murthy, R.K. Suryanarayana and R.K. Prakash, all chips off the old block, but as dissimilar in musical style and personality from one another as from their parent-mentor, who himself was an individualist when it came to exploring the depths and nuances of the delicate instrument.

As a young lad I also had the opportunity of attending Keshavamurthy's concerts at Mysore, where he was affectionately called Keshavayya. In one such memorable concert, I remember he played Kamkhaji which he treated most expansively as though the raga was meant to demonstrate his inexhaustible talent. He did not seem to have any time for other ragas that day. An elaborate ragalapana, followed by a masterly tana, and a ragamalika pallavi enthralled the spell bound audience.

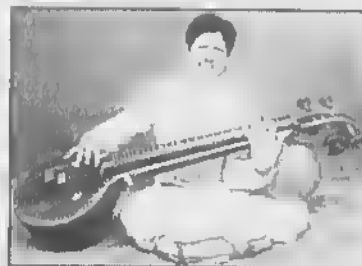
During the ragamalika I

could feel that Keshavamurthy was rather partial to ragas with shades of Hindustani music like Behag, Jenzhuti and Hindolam. There was no loud speaker system in those days, but Keshavayya's nimble fingers made his Veena vibrate to its full potential and even those like me squatting at the back of the hall could hear every stroke, every gamaka clearly enough.

The concert at Shankarayya hall was the occasion I cherish, especially Keshavamurthy's rendering of the Bhairavi Varnam, Virihoni. I must have heard Virihoni hundreds of times, but Keshavayya's rendering left a lasting impression on my mind. An elderly connoisseur sitting next whispered to me that Keshavamurthy had achieved this perfection as he practised this varnam for hours everyday all his life. He added reverentially that the Veena I was hearing was gifted by Subbanna to his beloved disciple.

Decades later, I learnt from R.K. Suryanarayana, Keshavamurthy's son, that the treasured Veena was safe in the custody of R.K. Padmanabha, his youngest brother. They were eleven brothers, a veritable cricket team.

Suryanarayana, like all his brothers learnt music from Keshavamurthy. All eleven were trained veena players, though a couple of them became vocalists and one of them, a mridangam player. Suryanarayana, however



R.K. Suryanarayana

specialised in the art of Veena. To listen to his Veena concert is always a refreshing experience. While Keshavamurthy concentrated on developing the Tana, Suryanarayana turned his attention to Kalpana Swara. As a matter of fact, Kalpana or improvisation is his strong point whether in essaying a raga alapana, or tana or kruti. There is improvisation even in his playing technique, as he uses all his ten fingers to produce a colourful effect in sound production.

I have heard Suryanarayana many times, and on each occasion I have wondered at his dexterity and control over the Veena which enable him to play at enormous speeds. His dazzling style, vivacity and enthusiastic experimentation are qualities I admire in him. With the rich reverberation emanating from the main strings, abetted by the sympathetic strings, he weaves on the Veena such an atmosphere of magic and melody that leaves you wondering whether you are hearing a single instrument or a string ensemble.



Hidden Talent Galore in SSS Annual

Swar Sadhna Samiti, organised the four-day 34th annual Sangeet Sammelan—(Swarsadhnotsava'99) April last in Mumbai. The festival enthralled the audiences with an array of vocal, instrumental and dance programmes rendered by artistes from all over India.

Opening with the traditional Saraswati Vandana composed by the Samiti's co-founders, Dr. Aban E. Mistry and her Guruji Pt. Keki S. Jijina, the sammelan introduced a host of hidden talent from all over India. It was a refreshing change listening to pristine Indian classical music, free from the gimmickery of modern commercialisation. Music flowed from the artistes' heart and struck the chords of its audiences, charging the ambience with a spiritual aura.

Leading vocalists Dr.



'Pakhawaj & Tabala' book by Dr. Aban Mistry being released

Prabha Atre, Dr. Sushila Rani Patel, Pt. Dinkar Kaikini, Pt. Mahadeo Mishra, all from Mumbai along with Dr. Ram Borgaonkar (Latur) rendered exquisite raagas. Sunanda Nair and her disciples presented a well-choreographed Mohini Attam Dance recital.

A Pakhawaj Kacheri by Pt. Vijay and Ajay Ram Das (Ayudhya), Pt. Udhav Appagonkar (Ambajogai), along with

Dnyaneshwar Sawant (Mumbai), provided an unusual item. V. Balsara's (Calcutta) piano recital demonstrated his mastery over the key board by bringing Indian ragas in a western instrument.

Tabla maestro, Dr. Aban E. Mistry with her creative genius held the audiences spell-bound during her Solo recital. She performed the rare feat of presenting four Taals at the same time by using both her hands, a foot and reciting orally, synchronising them to start and end on the same beat!

Eminent personalities were felicitated with Swar Sadhna Ratna award for their contribution to Indian Classical Music. Another highlight of the Sammelan was the release of 'Pakhawaj & Tabala—History, Schools & Traditions', a book in English authored by Dr. Aban E. Mistry.



Tabla Solo by Dr. Aban E. Mistry

Senior critic feted



Sri B.V.K. Shastri

The highlight in the cultural arena of the City in the preceding month was an impressive function to felicitate senior art critic B.V.K. Shastri.

The function at the Bangalore Gnyana Samaja was

organised by a committee of hosts, including such eminent persons like Dr. A.H. Rama Rao, H. Kamalanath, Dr. Raja Ramanna, *et al.*

Led by Dr. H. Narasimhaiah, deservedly glowing tributes were showered on the veteran critic, besides presenting him a Rs. one-lakh purse.

The occasion added significance as "Murali Vani", a collection of all Mr. Shastri's writings was released. The book is voluminous, carrying rare pieces of archival importance. Verily a useful



reference book that should adorn the shelves of every discerning literacy.

FAC

Another music sabha for Udupi

Keeping in view the following objects of promoting Karnataka and Hindustani systems of Music, and talented musicians of the area, a new institution was inaugurated in Udupi with the name "Sa Ri Pa Da Ni Ga Ma", in May last.

Presided over by the



Another Music Sabha for Udupi

eminent musician and founder of "Nada Vihavam" Udupi, Vasudeva Bhat, Vidwan Mathoor P. Balasubramanyam inaugurated the forum and unveiled the portrait of Attavara Janardhan, a Harmonium Maestro of Mangalore.

Vidwan K. Purnashotham Tantry, chief guest, recalled the efforts of Attavar Gokuldas, the founder of "Sa Ri Pa Da Ni Ga Ma". A.P. Kolaneba, in his felicitations said that he was happy that his native village had such an institution and promised whole-hearted co-operation. V. Arvinda Hebbar, Secretary. Raaga Dhana, said

that such institutions were a necessity in this temple town.

Sri Vishwa Prasanna Theertha, Swamiji of Pejuvar Mutt, while blessing the institution, praised the efforts of Gokuldas Attavar. Vasudeva Bhat recalled the valuable services rendered by eminent musicians of yester-years and called upon the younger generation to foster and nurture music which is the core of Indian culture.

Earlier, Kumar Karthik sang the invocation and U.R. Madhyastha welcomed the gathering. Founder Attavar Gokuldas proposed a vote of thanks.

The programme was directed by veteran vocalist H. Chandrashekar Kedlilayn.

—FAC

Nyasa Dance Competition

A dance competition marked the 85th Birthday of the late T.V. Gopinath Das, the founder of Prabhat Kalavidyam. The two-day fare featured more than 100 aspirants in the Sub-Junior, Junior, Senior sections.

The styles that vied for honours were Bharathanatyam and Kathak, a rolling shield being a bonus in either case.

PRIZE WINNERS

BIHARATHIANYAM:

Sub-Junior- 1 prize—Neelima (Vishakapatnam); II Prize—Mridula Venugopal (Bangalore).



T.V. Gopinathdas

Junior—1 Prize—Padmini Upadya; II—Prize—Shilpa Utappa.

Senior—1 Prize—Indhu M. II—Prize—Josephine Savitha.

The Rolling Shield went to Indhu M. Student of Nirupama Rajendra.

KATHAK:

Sub-Junior- 1 Prize—Suniana Chaudary.

Junior- 1 Prize—Mridula Rao.

Senior- 1 Prize—Sankya Puranik.

The Rolling Shield went to Sankya Puranik, Student of Maya Rao and Chitra Venugopal.

Pre-trinity composers' Day

—G.V.

The Samskrita Sangha of Indian Institute of Science has been celebrating 'Purandaradasa Day and Tyagaraja Aradhana' for the last nine years. As a new venture, on August 14, the Sangha got up, a unique program presenting songs of more than 25 pre-Trinity composers, with an aim to promote awareness about composers who lived before the era of the Trinity. The main participants were the Institute students, some senior artists of the Institute campus also taking part in the event.

The program started with the majestic Bhairavi Varnam Virubhi of Pachimi-

riyam Adiyappa. A few compositions of the Sangitha Pitamaha followed. Compositions of saints of the various Bhakti movements like the Haridasas, Nayanmars and Alwars, were covered. Songs from the musical operas GITA GOVINDA and KRISHNA LILA TARANGINI, the compositions of Oothukkadu Venkatasubhaiyer, select compositions of Sadasiva Brahmendra represented a plethora of Krishna Bhakti presentation. Paulams of Kshetrajna, Annamayya and kirtanas of Bhadrachala Ramadas presented a overview of Telugu Bhakti literature.

A few compositions of the

Tamil Trinity, Muthuthandavar, Marimatha Pillai and Arunbhakavi Rayar were also presented. The program concluded with a Mangalam of Bhadrachala Ramadas. Although the pre-Trinity music literature is exhaustive, only a kaleidoscopic view could be presented due to the limited time.

Slides containing a brief write-up about each composer and compositions were displayed during the program. The August 1999 issue of Phoenix has thrown a lot of light on the pre-Trinity composers and provided a major source for the preparation of the write-up. Following the success of this program, the Sangha is contemplating an celebrating 19th century composers' day.

PAC comes out with 2 more useful books

Unlike most music festivals, spread over almost through the year and sponsored by Sabhas of varied descriptions, the Percussive Arts Centre, Bangalore, adds a third dimension to its programmes. Besides the usual concerts and academic discussions, this exclusive organisation dedicated to the promotion of laya-based musical instruments, invariably releases one or more publications on the relative topics to add significance to such festivals.

This year's annual of the Centre in April-May last was no exception. The two books published during the five-day event were: 1. *Achievements in the field of percussive arts over 50 years (1947-97)*. It is a useful compilation of papers presented on the subject



H. Puttachar Memorial Award was presented to V. Praveen

during the annual of 1998. The writers are all scholars in their own chosen field, and their observations are worth giving more than cursory reading.

The second book is a compilation of musical

compositions of the late H. Narasinga Rao, a flutist of repute. The tract which carries a brief life sketch of the versatile artiste presents 15 compositions including Swara Jatis, Krits and devotionals. They are in a wide variety of ragas and carefully notated. It is a painstaking effort of Vidushi Padma Gurukulott, courtesy the maestro's daughter Indumati.

The annual festival commemorating the memory of the Mridangam wizard Palghat Mani Iyer, was inaugurated by the Pontiff of the Suttur Math. This was followed by the presentation of the Palani Subramanya Pillai award (donated by Sudha and Dr. A.H. Rama Rao of Ramasulha Charitable Trust). The award was conferred on



K. Putturao Memorial Award presented to Vidwan A. Kannan



Pulasthi Subramanyam Pillai Award conferred to Vidwan V.V. Ranganathan

Vidwan V.V. Ranganathan, a leading mridangam artiste of yesteryears.

A laya vinyasa in 'Chandana fala' by T.A.S. Mani and a Julatarang recital by B.D. Venugopal formed part of the proceedings of the day.

The H. Puttacher Memorial Award (donated by H.P. Ramachar) was presented to V. Praveen, a prominent Mridangam artiste on the second day. A Harikatha by Belur Vasanthalakshmi and a vocal recital by Dr. B.S. Vijayaraghavan were the other attraction of the evening.

The third day was marked by a vocal recital by Suguna Parashutham and Suguna Varadachari. This was preceded by a Harikatha by B. Bharathi of Sarvaraya Harikatha Padashala of East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh.

An expert committee considered the R & D activities in

the leathers and woods required in the manufacture of percussive instruments. A study circle on the maintenance of mridangam by P.V. Parameshwaram was as interesting. The concert for the day was by veteran R.K. Srikantan, an endowment created by him for a symposium on the Birth Centenaries of Masters of Music preceded the concert.

The validictory at the Chinnaiyah Memorial Hall was as usual a gala fare when the prestigious K. Puttinaray Memorial Award (in memory of Padmatil Mani Iyer) was given away to Vidwan Madras A. Kannan of Chennai. The Award was given away by Chief Justice Y. Bhaskar Rao of the Karnataka High Court.

An impressive Carnatic vocal recital by Vidwan Ashok Ramani brought the curtains down on the colourful annual.

FAC

Letter

Dear Editor

In the article 'Focus on Sadashiva Rao's kritis' (PHOENIX 4-1) it is said: That when Tyagaraja came to Chittoor, the birth place of Rao, in *unchavritti*, the former composed a *kriti* in *Todi* 'Sri Pavanama Kunurani' and sang it."

Sadashiva Rao, it has been widely believed, left Chittoor while yet a boy and it was a blessing in disguise. His period was 1826-1906 or 1880. Tyagaraja should have made the trip to Tirupati, Tiravotriyur, Kanchi and Kaveri fairly long before he was too old to travel. There is perhaps no version of his visit to Chittoor or Rao receiving him there. The following is the version in the 'Garland's:

Saint Tyagaraja visited Wallajahpet and was received by Venkataramana Bhagavathar. Rao was present and sang his composition, Tyagarajaswami Vedadina.

Perhaps the issue may be checked by those interested.

Chennai

Yours sincerely
Rajagopalram

Delightful Baroque Music

(K. Raghavendra Rao)

In the Western classical music history, the period 1600—1750 AD is known as the Baroque Period, which served as a bridge between the Renaissance and the later day classical period. The Baroque music has its parallels in the German—Austrian Architecture of that age, with its elaborate, ornamental appearance and lines denoting continuity. The preceding polyphonic music gave way to the contra-puntal and new forms such as the choruses combined with arias, duets, quartets, opera, oratoria, cantata, concerto, suite, etc.

The significant change was that instruments started accompanying choruses and compositions came to be written exclusively for instruments.

The basic mode of continuity was brought about by two principal lines—melody and bass, giving rise to an imbued harmony. The melody line was through instruments such as harpsichord, organ, recorder, etc., while the bass continuum (the continuous bass) was through instruments like cello, double bass or bass viola. The important composers of this period were Monteverdi, Corelli, Scarlatti and Vivaldi from Italy, Lully and Rameau from France, J.S. Bach and Telemann from Germany and Purcell and Handel from England.

Mysore Music Association had arranged a concert of European Baroque music in the Darbar Hall of Hotel Southern Star 1st August. The group comprised Brian Brooks on Violin, Rebecca Prosser on Recorder, Timothy Merton on cello and Maggie Cole on Harpsichord. Two of the artistes were from England and the other two from U.S.A. Their passion for Baroque music brought these professional musicians and music teachers together and this was their first tour as a group.

It was interesting to learn how they pitched upon the name "Sarasa" for their group—one of the cellist's friends is an Indian whose mother's name is "Sarawathi". On learning that this name stands for the Godless of music, they shortened and adapted it.

The concert was a testimony to the meaning of Sarasa in Sanskrit—good aesthetics and fluency.

The instruments were themselves noteworthy. Though the violin came into use in the 16th century itself, its usage became more prominent during the Baroque period and many pieces were written for this instrument by composers like Corelli and Vivaldi especially. The violinist informed that though the violins produced in Cremona, Italy three centuries ago are

priceless preferred ones, the violin he was playing for this concert was a two-month old one manufactured by a Japanese in Canada! The Recorders are flutes which are held vertically and played, much like our pastoral folk instrument "pittlangovi". The Harpsichord, a precursor of the piano is a keyboard instrument, the strings being plucked like in a Sitar or Guitar but with a mechanism which plucks when the keys are pressed. (In the piano, the strings are struck and not plucked when the keys are pressed). The artiste informed that she dared not bring her six feet long delicate harpsichord on this tour and she borrowed an electronic one from Bangalore. The baroque-cello is similar to the regular cello. But, the resting pin is not provided and the instrument is held between the thighs and played with a shorter bow. The tonal quality, however, is similar.

The Recital:

In this one and a half hour recital, the recorder and violin took the melody line while the cello and harpsichord provided the continuous bass. Handel's (1685—1759), Sonata in C-Minor in four movements, a solo harpsichord sonata by Scarlatti (1685—1757), a Sonata in C-Minor for violin and harpsichord by J.S. Bach

(1685-1750), a Canzon, (Sonata replaced it later), the Italian Francesca Cavalli's (1602-1676) Sonata in G-Minor by Telemann (1601-1767) and a concert in D-Major by Vivaldi were the authentic Baroque fare served. Incidentally, the earliest piece was by Cavalli, who brought

into use the term "opera" in 1639. On audience demand the artists obliged with an encore, one of the very early pieces of the Baroque period by Castello (early 17th Century) when instrumental music was gaining ground and the Sonata form made its entry. In fact the title of the piece was "Prima

Sonata" the first Sonata.

Brief introductions were given for each piece which were illuminating.

Kudos to the Mysore Music Association for having arranged such a nice Baroque Music recital here. A rare but delightful event.

INLIGHTER VEIN

Shifts in Status

—Manu Iyengar

For once, the minds of people in the film industry are ticking. People have been made to think instead of just mindless gyrations.

This temporary phase has ensured former humble Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Ms. Sushma Swaraj bestowing an official "industry status" on the film world.

Filmi Ing who have been fighting for this privilege for years, now have passed to find out what this actually means. Institutional finance, I suppose, as opposed to depending on shifty-eyed under world dons, sensible working hours, minimum wage, labour regulations, social security, means of legal recourse, etc. Will all this bring with it a greater degree of professionalism?

We, in the dance and music field must sit up and take notice. The government machinery has always shared a love-hate relationship with the cultural field. We cannot bear their interference, but we are unable to manage without

their aid. We complain about whom they choose to project, and crave their indulgence for a while, and if we happen to get a moment's mercy, we complain about restrictions and squirm out of the ensuing responsibilities.

Many of the institutions receiving grants from the HRD Ministry for maiden ventures/productions, lose their credibility by misusing the funds. More taxpayers money. Therefore, the dust, The government and the cultural field, shall, at best be indifferent bed fellows.

The corporate houses beguile musicians and dancers with mega-bucks. But there is proposition that is unfaithful it's there at times and unavailable at most. Sports and popular cultural events are more worth their while, bringing national exposure and access to younger generations. So, the filtration between the arts and the corporates continue, no long-standing commitment can be achieved.

This, then, lands us squarely on the government's

doorstep. They have the money, the wherewithal and the social obligation to patronize the arts. But what must we, as artists give them back for their efforts? Do we continue to print a single invitation as proof of the usage of government grants, and fill our greedy pockets, or do we use the patronage to further the cause of the art, giving it the full reach of creativity and energy, to come up with a production which adds to our cultural heritage?

Because of a few law-breakers the credit of the artistic community is at stake. Let's try to further the cause of the field, rather than probe the pillars that are trying to strengthen its structure. Let's have the regulations, restrictions and structures, because, without them there will be corruption and mayhem. Let's be professional in our approach, and put it an honest day's work to make us worthy of the anticipated reward. So what if Pt. Brijn Maharaj has to retire from the Kathak Kendra at the age of 60 years. He is now a living legend, thanks in no small measure to the years of support secured from a government institution!



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